

A QUEEN

A kingdom has twenty women for every man.

The queen, no longer young, is quite distressed. She can't compete with the pretty young things at court, to say nothing of milkmaids and other wenches. And she is too proud to decree a lover.

A vendor brings a lovely pink dress. She tries it on -- looks ten years younger and radiant. Overjoyed, she orders all other women to wear gray.

Soon, she has scores of lovers. While the ladies in gray pine, suitors line up outside her chamber door.

After several years of this, the kingdom is going to seed. Since they have no men, the women are all unhappy. Since they all want the queen, but can't all have her, the men are unhappy. The queen is completely worn out. What's worse, the birth rate has dropped to zero.

Deciding strong measures are in order, the queen burns the pink dress, puts on a gray. Decrees all other women must wear pink. But by then, the men are hopelessly besotted by the queen, who besides being a queen is quite a woman.

Desperate, she removes the royal wig, under which her hair is as gray as her dress. Then opens her chamber door to the line of suitors.

"Go back to your women!" she commands. "Or anyway, seek others." The men snicker. "They're lovely and pink," she pleads, "I'm gray."

The men laugh softly, wrestle with each other to get to the head of the line.

TWO WITCHES

There are two sisters who are witches. Though they look alike, the older sister, Morgana, is irritable and vicious (as is only befitting a witch). The younger, Cybele, is hopelessly sweet.

Morgana is feared and hated by all, and boasts about this constantly to Cybele, whose spells invariably backfire; who can't get her broomstick off the ground.

Cybele begins to suspect that her sister's powers come from a certain mirror: a family heirloom which, she decides, should have come to her. So she steals the mirror, hangs it on her wall.

"Today I'll do something outrageously wicked," she says to the mirror.

"Ha!" says the mirror, with a sneer.

She twists her dainty mouth into a snarl, narrows her eyes. "I'm going to be the nastiest witch in the land."

"Who are you kidding!" laughs the mirror.

Furious for the first time in her life, she kicks the mirror, splitting it down the center. Then she goes out and turns a prince into a hedgehog.

Morgana, finding her precious mirror cracked, weeps piteously, looking almost human.

Pretty soon, you can't tell which is witch.

-- Judith Berke

Miami Beach FL

TO JOHN GARFIELD, FOR WHOM THE POSTMAN ONLY RANG ONCE

No one knows why you killed yourself,
but your movies offer clues.
You snapped everything:
cigarette cases, hat brims, gloves, women.

In comparison, Britain's Angry Young Men
were honor roll students from Dale Carnegie.
You were representative, but I'm not sure of what.
A lost generation of one, in boxing gloves or
pinstripe suits.

As the honest crook in Force of Evil, you told
Eleanor Parker:
"My trouble is I feel like midnight."